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TAGS: [IR](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [IAEA](#)

SUBJECT: TALKING POINTS ON IRAN: ELECTIONS, THIRD SANCTIONS RESOLUTION

Classified By: NEA Acting A/S Gordon Gray for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Over the next two months, a number of key events related to Iran will take place: the UN Security Council is expected to adopt a third Chapter VII sanctions resolution on Iran; the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General ElBaradei will issue a late February report on Iran which the IAEA Board of Governors will discuss at its March 3-7 meeting; and Iran will hold parliamentary elections on March 14. Guidance below (please see paragraph five) urges posts to forbear extensive public comment on the elections to avoid making U.S. policy the story in the election. We want to maintain focus on the internal Iranian debate about economic problems and corruption. This approach is consistent with our past policy of avoiding commentary (in the run-up to elections) that might be manipulated internally by the regime to go after critics.

¶2. (SBU) The timing of the effort to pass a third UNSCR and the IAEA Board of Governors meeting, however, may well raise questions about whether the U.S. and the P5+1 are indirectly attempting to influence the outcome of the elections, by pressuring the regime. Intense media attention surrounding Iran's nuclear impasse will likely seek to draw connections between the nuclear issues and internal Iranian politics. In using the guidance below, posts should refrain from juxtaposing the nuclear issues with the parliamentary elections. This cable provides background on these events and talking points posts may use in addressing these issues with host governments and the press.

IRAN'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: BACKGROUND

¶3. (C) On March 14, Iranians will go to the polls to elect 290 members of parliament. Iran's elections are fundamentally flawed, in part because they include a vetting process that prevents large numbers of candidates from running because of their ideological preferences. Iran's Ministry of Interior (which manages its Election Commission) has initially disqualified 40 percent of registered candidates, including large numbers of reformists. Iran's Council of Guardians, a 12-person body appointed by Iran's Supreme Leader and parliament, will announce the final list of approved candidates on March 5.

¶4. (C) Although Iran's elections cannot be considered free, fair, or transparent, U.S. statements about the election

process prior to March 14 would likely distract attention from serious and legitimate grievances the Iranian people have with the current government's handling of the economy, corruption, and nuclear policy. We therefore intend to issue a statement and prepare an op-ed condemning flaws in the election process that will be released after election day. Department discourages posts from commenting publicly on the elections prior to March 14.

IRAN'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: TALKING POINTS

¶5. (U) If asked, posts may use the following talking points with the media:

-- The United States encourages governments around the world to hold free, fair, and transparent elections. We call on Iran to meet these international standards and respect the will of the people.

-- If pressed: We encourage Iran to allow its people to choose the candidates they want for their elections. While the final list of candidates will not be made public until shortly before the elections, Iranian media report large numbers of candidates will be disqualified based on ideology.

Iran's elections cannot be considered free and fair if the Guardians Council limits who Iranians can freely vote for by vetting all candidates before they are placed on a ballot.

¶6. (U) If asked, posts may use the following talking points with counterparts:

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-- The United States will minimize comment on the elections prior to March 14. U.S. bilateral comment tends to distract from the main issues of the elections: Iran's poor economy and Ahmadinejad's mismanagement of Iran's domestic and foreign policies.

-- We do, however, intend to issue a strong statement after the election, and want to coordinate our post-election message with the EU and key allies.

-- What does (country) plan to do in advance of/after the elections? How can we support internal Iranian calls for more electoral transparency?

¶7. (C) USEU, select European posts, and the U.S. Mission to the OSCE will be contacted separately about coordinating our response to and activities surrounding Iran's elections.

THIRD UNSCR ON IRAN: BACKGROUND

¶8. (C) P5 1 Foreign Ministers agreed to elements of a new UNSC resolution on Iran on January 22 in Berlin. The EU3 (UK, France, Germany) Missions in New York convened a meeting with the full Council on January 25 to share the elements and begin discussions. We seek quick adoption of the resolution by the full Council. While we cannot discuss the details of the elements, as they are just now being reviewed and considered by the full Council, they follow the P5 1 agreed approach of incrementally increasing the severity and expanding upon existing sanctions imposed on Iran in UNSCRs 1737 (December 2006) and 1747 (March 2007). The draft also introduces a few new elements. The resolution signals to Tehran that the international community is united in preventing it from acquiring the technology to build a nuclear weapon.

THIRD UNSCR ON IRAN: TALKING POINTS

¶9. (U) Posts may use the following talking points when discussing the draft UNSCR:

-- On January 22, the P5+1 Foreign Ministers met in Berlin and reached agreement on the elements of a new UNSC resolution on Iran. The agreement demonstrates yet again that there is international solidarity behind the proposition that Iran can not be allowed to have the technologies that can lead to the development of a nuclear weapon.

-- The P5+1 agreed in Berlin that the first priority is to engage with the other ten members of the UN Security Council. As such, the elements were shared with all members of the UN Security Council January 25 in New York; the EU3 subsequently shared the full resolution text with the full Council on February 1.

-- The Council is now engaged in consultations and we expect the resolution within the next couple of weeks.

-- The resolution follows the P5+1 agreed approach of incrementally increasing the severity and expanding upon existing sanctions. This resolution incrementally builds upon sanctions imposed on Iran in UNSCRS 1737 (December 2006) and 1747 (March 2007) and introduces a few new measures.

-- While we cannot comment on specific elements of the draft resolution, you should be aware that it will likely contain financial measures similar to, but an expansion of, those adopted in past resolutions. For instance, it expands the list of entities and individuals subject to the asset freeze.

Iran's financial activities in support of proliferation are well known and we are committed to taking steps that will impede them.

-- It is critical that the Council continue to stand united on this issue and move to quickly adopt this new resolution. Further delay by the Council sends the wrong message to Iran and risks undermining the credibility of international efforts towards a diplomatic solution, as well as the credibility of the Council on this critical issue.

-- The new resolution is part of our dual track strategy to clarify to Iran's leaders the consequences of its continued noncompliance, while also keeping open the door to direct negotiations. We hope the adoption of the third UNSC

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sanctions resolution, with further sanctions to persuade Iran, will demonstrate to Iran that the UNSC is determined that Iran must meet its nonproliferation obligations, specifically those imposed by the Council.

-- The June 2006 P5+1 offer of significant incentives to Iran still stands, including the historic offer of direct U.S. talks anywhere, anytime, on any issue once Iran meets its UNSC obligation to suspend. We reiterate our call for Iran to comply with its UNSC obligations by suspending all of its proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities, especially enrichment, and cooperating fully with the IAEA.

-- We ask you to publicly express support for quick action by the Council.

-- If pressed on argument for delay due to IAEA Director General ElBaradei's report:

-- We want the IAEA process to succeed. If we delay until the DG's report is released, we will increase the likelihood Iran will bide its time on full disclosure to the IAEA. Additionally, the IAEA's Work Plan with Iran is about concerns about Iran's past activities. The action on a new UNSCR is driven by concerns about Iran's current activities and Iran's failure to comply with UNSC requirement to suspend its proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities, including enrichment.

-- Iran has ignored all previous deadlines for completing the Work Plan. If we delay the adoption of this resolution

further, we risk signaling to Tehran that it can avoid indefinitely further sanctions by making slow, incremental "progress" with the IAEA, vice full and immediate disclosure and verification. This would serve no one's interests especially the IAEA's. The credibility of the NPT, the IAEA, and the safeguards system is also very much at stake.

¶10. (U) There will be more detailed guidance and talking points forthcoming as the UNSCR progresses through the full Council in New York, as well as IAEA BOG guidance.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

¶11. (SBU) Additional talking points on Iran policy may be found at the NEA/IR sensitive but unclassified Intellipedia site, <https://www.intelink.gov/wiki/Portal:Iran>. Questions on nuclear policy and the UNSCR can be directed to ISN/RA Kurt Kessler at 202-647-4796 or IO/T Heather Von Behren at 202-647-2753. Questions on Iran's elections may be directed to DRL/NESCA Kate Lurie at 202-647-4753 or NEA/IR Carolyn Coberly at 202-647-2513.

¶12. Minimize considered.
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